

birds of a feather

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birds of a feather

by [greyquills](#)

Summary

His limbo was hell. It's inherent in the way his shoulders pinch together, in the lines around his eyes, even in the streak of grey hair that refuses to cooperate. His body shows the toll that thirteen years have taken. Thirteen years in human form, no less.

“Fuck yeah,” says Wilbur Soot, and he smiles a dizzying grin of sharp teeth before he turns to meet his father's gaze. As he does, a stray feather comes free from within his cloak, drifting to the floor in a lazy motion. Riding the air currents just like the crow it came from.

or: Wilbur gets revived but crowbur is canon. Phil and Techno don't know what to think.

Notes

welcome to my take on april 29th and the events that followed. featuring crowbur brainrot. screams.

cw for mentions of death.

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

Wilbur Soot comes back to life on a Thursday.

There's no fanfare to proceed it. One moment he's stuck in a dreary, grey afterlife—the train station that haunts both his mind and his songs—and the next he *breathes*, a sudden, sharp jerk of his lungs. It's like a hook has been lodged behind his ribs and pulled. Wilbur is a fish caught on a line, helpless, reeled in by none other than Dream.

He breathes, and he coughs, and he stares up at the world— real and *tangible* underneath his fingers—in shock. His vision, blurry from months spent incorporeal, hyper-focuses on the horizon and the fuzzy light of dawn breaking.

(His sunrise.)

Will's fingers tingle. He becomes increasingly aware of what surrounds him—a ringing in his ears, the oppressive darkness of night just before it turns to day, lanterns that cut through the sky. The rubble that scrapes his fists raw when he props himself up.

The massive crater spread out beneath him.

“Wilbur?”

He doesn't react. His hand stretches out of his own volition, brushing the lapis monument erected before him. His touch meets jeweled stone, cold against his nerves, and Wilbur makes a small sound in his chest.

He wants to soar through the sky. He feels trapped down here, claustrophobic. He wants to fly on wings of obsidian, leap high above this wretched world— *but that isn't right, this isn't the station, this isn't Jubilee Line, this is L'Manburg in all its wretched glory.*

There's a sharp intake of breath on his right, so he slowly raises his gaze to see who has interrupted his solitude. His mind is dancing, burning—his thoughts shout *i'm alive! i'm alive and i'm back and i can feel everything, my skin is burning* in a neverending chorus—and his eyes flash with that flame when he settles them on a familiar face.

Well. A once-familiar face, anyway. Three years have passed with the slow march of time since he saw his little brother in the solace of limbo. Much has changed—Tommy's face is more gaunt, his eyes heavy and guarded, and there's a new scar slicing its way up his temple. His blond hair is in desperate need of a cut—it trails over his forehead in curls that obscure his vision.

“Tommy,” Wilbur crows with fierce delight, and his little brother flinches back. “Hello again.”

The greeting is far too simple. An entire conversation passes between them in that moment as Tommy's eyes of ice meet Wilbur's eyes of fire. Brothers, betrayed. Brothers, reunited at last.

“Wilbur,” his little brother chokes out, finally, sounding like he’s been shattered into a million pieces. Wilbur doesn’t mind—he’ll be the one to put those tiny pieces back together, after all. He’s willing to glue them haphazardly one by one, and he always has been. Tommy is his creation, made new. It’s always been Wilbur and Tommy—he sees no reason why that should change.

But Tommy isn’t alone this time, and Wilbur’s heart *burns* in his chest.

“Tommy?” comes another voice, unfamiliar, and Wilbur’s spine snaps straight. Irritation courses through his veins as the kid’s accent curls around the words in a similar way to Dream’s. He speaks with a twang, drawing out the first syllable: *Tahm-my*? “Is this him?”

The words are quiet, hushed, as though whispered to another. Wilbur twists his head a bit further—he doesn’t have the range of a crow, not now, but it’s enough to see a third face peering back at him. *Tubbo*.

“Hello, again,” Wilbur says, feeling like he could choke on the words. They claw at his throat with sharp nails and rough anger.

Three sets of eyes harden at once. Throat dry, Wilbur gives the last figure a cursory once-over—a tall boy, probably around Tommy’s age, with long hair that falls in his eyes. When he notices Wilbur’s attention on him, the boy whitens a bit, drawing into himself like he doesn’t want to be here.

Well. Wilbur can’t exactly blame him for that, can he?

“Yeah,” Tommy says to the boy. He exhales so shakily Wilbur thinks a particularly strong gust of wind might blow him away. He’s certainly feeling unsteady himself.

So he gives into the urge to laugh, to scream, to shout his joy from every corner of this crater. And, oh, what a *beautiful* crater! All his hard work, immortalized in destruction and rubble. His unfinished symphony, forever unfinished.

He lets himself revel in the way Tommy flinches back every time he takes a step nearer. He revels in the way that Tubbo clutches the other kid’s arm closer, as though Wilbur is dangerous. As though he’s a *threat*.

(Maybe he is.)

His cracked voice, rough from disuse, screams and laughs and *rejoices*. Wilbur is alive, he’s alive, he’s *alive*! Of course he’s fucking celebrating!

He knows where he must go next. He knows what he must do, so he bids the boys farewell with a laugh he *knows* is unhinged. He can’t bring himself to care about the way his little brother flinches back, about the way Tubbo’s eyes go glazed, about the way the new kid—Ranboo something or other—grits his sharp teeth. “Bye!” Wilbur says, coos, taunts, *shouts*, and he means it.

The transformation, when it comes, feels as natural as breathing. Wilbur wants to sob in relief when the smoke clears and he's standing a foot and a half off the ground. His beady little eyes blink once, twice, and then he's soaring off into the sky with reckless abandon.

He knows where he must go. The wind calls, and Wilbur obeys.

Limbo is grey and dreary and monotonous. There are no crows here, only empty trains and the buzzing of a third rail that Wilbur hears in his sleep. Not that he sleeps—time is strange, here, and his body does not require the same things that it used to.

If there were crows, he thinks they would hate him on principle. Philza's murder always tried to play tricks on him—never mean spirited, not at first, not until his fall—when he was a boy. He hates himself enough. After all, Wilbur has always been one of Philza's crows.

First, he was a son, then a soldier, then an enemy who begged for death. Always a problem. Always a stray, flying at the back of the murder. Always the boy stuck in between. Always the fucking outcast.

Until he met Tommy.

Tommy, whose smiles lit up the world like flame held to gasoline. Tommy, who poked human Wilbur and stroked crow Wilbur and loved so fiercely that it made him dangerous. Dangerous to Dream; dangerous to Wilbur, even, in the end.

He wishes he could see Tommy again.

But that end is not the end, because Wilbur's thoughts are coming faster and faster and his heart is beating rapidly and a train is pulling into the station, and there's a man dressed in familiar green, and a hook lodges itself behind his ribs and pulls—

*And he **breathes** .*

He follows the trail of crows laid before him.

Philza's scent is scattered on the wind, so Wilbur flies north with all the haste he can manage. His wings catch wind; he rides the air currents with a terrifying glee. It's the most alive he's felt in days, months, *years*.

Snow passes beneath him, a blanket of pure white: soft and oh-so-cold. Wilbur breathes in deep with his little crow lungs as his little crow heart beats furiously.

He's alive. *He's alive.*

Wilbur wants this adrenaline to run through his veins for the rest of eternity; wants to run, to shout, to fly, to fuck, to laugh, to *fight*. Being alive is his drug of choice and he's already addicted. Forget cigarettes. Forget blue. He's hooked on the feeling of oxygen pouring itself down his throat, carbon dioxide clawing its way back up again.

His sharp eyes catch a flaw in the perfect covering of snow—a small cabin perched on an outcropping of rock. Light pours from its windows like stars, pinpoints of brightness in an otherwise black expanse of night.

Wilbur blinks beady eyes, and then he's throwing himself into a dizzying dive towards the house. Wind and snow and trees rush by him in a blur of motion. He lets out a squawk, a noise of excitement and trepidation both—

And promptly collides with one of the windows.

Fuck. *Fuck*. Wilbur collapses onto the snow in a heap of crow limbs, his wings bulky and uncooperative. His tiny, stupid little bird brain aches something fierce. He's so fucking stupid—of course he forgets that glass exists, even if he can't see it while in this form.

He manages to pick himself up and ruffle his feathers, chirping when he tucks his wings back. A stray grey feather catches his eye—he stares, head twisted at an odd angle, and almost misses it when the door opens.

A familiar grumbling voice meets his ears. Words register after a moment, when he focuses: “—told you, Phil, it's one of your stupid crows again. They keep flying into the window, can't a guy get any sleep around here—”

Wilbur whips his head back around and *stares*. Techno stands in front of him in all his glory, his pink hair illuminated from behind by the lantern light. He looks ethereal, otherworldly, exactly like the Blood God of his namesake. Wilbur's brother, Wilbur's *friend*—once upon a time. Thirteen years ago, maybe.

Seeing Techno so suddenly is jarring, no doubt, but what really and truly breaks Will is the voice that follows his brother out into the cold night air. His *father's* voice—Phil's words trail over Techno's shoulder, amused. Will chirps a broken sound of shock and feels his feathers go stiff all over.

“I told you, mate, they can't see glass,” he says, ducking around Techno to stare into the night air. The gazes of both men pierce the darkness—neither of them looks down to see Wilbur. “It's cruel not to put up blinds, they'll hurt themselves.”

“Where'd it go?” Techno groans, glancing around with a practiced eye before his gaze falls on Wilbur, still curled up on top of the snow. Wilbur swallows; his bird throat works in trepidation.

All too soon, Techno's striding forward to pick Wilbur up in cupped hands. Will squawks and half heartedly flaps his wings, but Techno's grip is like ice, cold against warm feathers. “Come here, little guy,” he soothes with uncharacteristic softness.

He's carried into the house by his brother and set down on a kitchen table in a nest of blankets. Faintly, he registers the warmth permeating the cabin—from a fireplace, most likely—and the glow cast by several lanterns surrounding him. The sweet smell of spices reaches Will's weak bird nostrils, and he cocks his little head to the side. He can hear the bubbling of food on the stove.

The crow part of Wilbur's brain—the part that flies into windows, the part that meddles and wants to fly—tells him to burrow deeper into the nest. The rational part wins, thank fuck, so Wilbur extricates himself from the trap with a screech and glides to the floor.

He doesn't think before he transforms. Maybe he should have—when the fog and phantom pains cease, he's left staring up at his father and his brother with a furrowed brow and heavy limbs. All three of them are frozen in place; the room is silent except for the harsh rise and fall of Wilbur's chest with breath.

Phil stares at Wilbur with thinly-veiled shock. There's something hard in his gaze, though—something steely. *He knew*, Wilbur thinks. Somehow, he's faintly aware that it's Ranboo's fault, but he doesn't feel like unpacking all *that* right now.

He must look a sight, Wilbur knows—sunk to his knees, clothes wet with snow, grey hair sticking in all directions and a nasty bump on his head to boot. Staring up at his father, the man who killed him, wide of eyes and heart.

“Will,” Philza says haltingly. At his side, Techno tenses, his tusks poking out from behind bitten lips. He needs some Vaseline, Wilbur thinks suddenly, violently. It's such a normal, inane thought that he feels ill with himself all over again. “Techno, go turn the stove down. It's—Wilbur, is that really you?”

Wilbur spares a dry glance down at himself, as if to check, and finds himself distracted by the sight of dirty clothes and calloused skin. God, he's so *old*—his bones protest the motion in a shout of pain. The last time he walked this earth, he was young; young enough to touch the sky with fingers of gold, to command countries and armies, to challenge rulers and compose poetry and song. To fly.

And then he was older, only slightly, but the gold tarnished and his family betrayed him and he lost his mind. He tumbled downwards in an unsteady dive, damning himself to a place far below the tangibility of life.

That place in between—Wilbur's limbo—was hell. It's inherent in the way his shoulders pinch together, in the lines around his eyes, in the streak of grey hair that refuses to cooperate. His body shows the toll that thirteen years have taken. Thirteen years in human form, no less.

“Fuck yeah, it is,” says Wilbur Soot, and he *smiles* a dizzying grin of sharp teeth before he raises his eyes to meet his father's gaze. As he shifts, a stray feather comes free, drifting to the floor in a lazy motion.

Phil's eyes catch on it. Something grows stormy within them—the flicker of thunder and lightning that rumbles deep within Wilbur's chest. A chasm widens between father and son, man and man, once master and apprentice but now equals. It splits the earth with vicious abandon, blackening the ground beneath Wilbur's fingers.

Of all the things meant to be, this is not one of them.

A throat clears. “Wilbur—”

“Techno,” he says, sing-song, in that way he would have taunted his family before his death. Techno flinches back, cowed. *Good*. “Aren’t you happy to see me?”

“Ecstatic,” Techno drawls without missing a beat, because Techno has always been able to cover up his true feelings with razor-sharp wit. “You gonna tell us what happened? Seein’ how you’re supposed to be dead an’ all?”

Wilbur studies them with careful and thoughtful patience, letting the silence stretch out uncomfortably before he speaks. He can feel his grasp on reality slipping—the madness, the anger, the irritation all itches beneath his skin. He wants to peel it off and scratch every inch of muscle underneath. It *burns*.

“Tommy,” he says, his voice ice despite the fire in his veins, and the room’s temperature abruptly drops. Phil’s doing, most likely. “I woke up in L’Manburg, and the first thing I saw was Tommy. Phil—it was Dream.” He laughs, strained but joyful all the same. “It was Dream! *Dream’s* the one who saved me from that awful fucking place. You have no idea what it was like there for thirteen years. Thirteen *fucking* years.”

Phil’s expression shifts into something dangerous. It’s subtle—the press of his lips together, the furrowing of his brow. *Something* is wrong here. Their little family, torn into shreds.

(It’s Wilbur’s fault. At the same time, it’s not).

He expects Phil’s next words to cut like diamond sharpened to a blade.

“It’s been six months,” Philza finally says, his mouth twisted in a thin line. His voice is surprisingly soft, like he’s trying to soothe a wounded animal. Or—and Wilbur’s heart thuds with delightful realization and not a small amount of trepidation—like a predator trapping its prey. “Will—it’s been six months.”

The rest goes unsaid. *Six months since November sixteenth*. Six months since Phil ran his own son through with a sword. Six months since L’Manburg went up in flames, since Tubbo inherited a shit hole of a country, since Tommy was betrayed by both brothers. Six months since Wilbur’s death.

He watches that realization spread across Philza’s face with bitter satisfaction. *He asked Phil to kill him. He begged his own father for death.*

But was it mercy, in the end, when that sword pierced his heart? Was it mercy when the death message flashed across everyone’s communicators—when Tommy made eye contact with Phil? Was it merciful of Phil to kill a man whose only crime had been loving a country too much to give it up?

Will still doesn’t know.

“Time is— *different* in limbo,” he tells his father. When he grins, it’s a sharp bite of teeth. *Fuck, he has so much to do*. “Incredibly fucking different. Didn’t Tommy tell you?”

And it's a loaded question, because he *knows* Phil hasn't spoken to Tommy for months—since Wilbur's death, most likely. He knows what Phil thinks of Tommy, and he knows how Tommy would respond to Phil's pity.

(Phil likes to pretend he doesn't play favorites, but they all know how much he prefers Techno's company to that of his other sons.)

If he needed to, Wilbur could describe Phil's reaction to the words perfectly. His father's eyes widen before hardening into something like flint. His eyebrows draw together and his lips press into a scowl, and he stares down at Wilbur with anger and regret battling for dominance in his gaze.

Thankfully, Techno is the one who speaks next, or else Wilbur thinks something might go up in flames. "Get off the floor, idiot," he huffs out. Wilbur is too startled to take the hand he offers, so Techno just sighs and pulls him roughly to his feet. He overbalances before steadying himself against a nearby coffee table.

"Phil, go grab food," Techno orders. It's not a request; Phil glances at Wilbur, then heads into the kitchen. His footsteps ring out on wooden floorboards, reminding Will of a childhood long gone.

Once Phil is somewhat out of earshot, Techno turns to Wilbur. "Holy crap, man, give me some warnin' next time," Techno says, crossing his arms over his chest with familiar grace. For someone who spends most of their time fighting and painting the earth in blood, he moves with a fluid elegance that's hard for Wilbur not to be jealous of.

Will's always been far more unstable than Techno, anyway. He leans against walls, stuffs his hands into pockets, gestures wide and violently. He's fallen more than once on stairs, and he has no balance in a fight. Part of it is due to his crow blood. When he was born, Wilbur inherited mannerisms that make no sense for humans to have—cocks his head to the side, fights over territory, gets distracted by shiny things. Techno has always been the opposite of him, moving with surety and steadiness.

Techno, the rock of the family. Even now, Techno's still trying to mend the broken, ripped threads of a relationship long damned. Wilbur can hear the way his words are guarded—his piglin-like ears flatten against his head in clear alarm.

Huh. Maybe Techno *has* grown a backbone after all, then.

Wilbur takes a moment to study his brother's expression. Techno's face is gaunt, exhausted—he looks like he hasn't been sleeping well. His lips are cracked, his eyes are surrounded by smudged kohl and the redness of exhaustion, and he rocks back and forth with jittery uncertainty while Wilbur scrutinizes him.

"Could you quit doin' that?" Techno says after a moment. "It's kind of unsettling."

"Doing what?"

"Looking at me like you're about to gouge my eyes out," Techno draws.

“Sure,” Wilbur says, but he doesn’t tear his gaze away from Techno’s red piercing eyes. There’s a challenge there, somewhere.

Techno sighs. “Do you have to be this difficult?”

“‘M not being difficult.”

“Okay, fine,” Techno says, and he backs away a step. Their gazes entwine, battling with blades of hard ice. Wilbur lets his eyes burn with the anger of blue fire, scowling, until Phil’s heavy footsteps can be heard in the doorway once again.

“There’s extra soup if you want some, Will,” he says. Wilbur’s breath catches in his throat.

The soup means nothing. It’s soup—it’s food. A pain in the ass to remember to eat, if he wants to stay healthy. But Phil’s offer means everything—the chance at normalcy, the possibility of *family*, after all this time.

“Soup, and somewhere to stay,” Phil says. Cautious. He quite clearly doesn’t trust Will, and Wilbur doesn’t blame him. “We’ve extra blankets. Techno likes to stress knit.”

“I do no such thing,” Techno retorts. His voice is light, but there’s an edge to it and a threat in his eyes when he levels his gaze on Wilbur. A warning.

“You’d let me stay here?” Wilbur hates how broken his voice sounds. He wants to scratch at his vocal cords, let the fire out, but he *can’t*. It hurts.

Phil lets out a short huff of breath. “You’ve been given another chance at life. Why waste it?”

And even if Wilbur can’t quite bring himself to reunite with his father; even if he both loves and hates himself for what he’s done; even if Tommy detests him and Techno never speaks to him again like he used to, he *will not waste this chance at life*.

So he takes a deep breath, meets Phil’s gaze evenly, and nods.

(Somewhere far, far away, a prisoner crumples to his knees in anger inside an obsidian cell.)

End Notes

i had a bit of trouble characterizing revivebur here so i'd appreciate feedback if you've got any!! all comments, kudos, and bookmarks are super duper appreciated <3 according to ao3 statistics, only a small percentage of my readers actually leave comments. so please leave a comment - it's free ~~and you can always delete the comment later~~ /c

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